



AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (canceled)

2. (currently amended): ~~The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the downwardly open slot is~~ Apparatus for retracting wall surfaces within a vagina during examination with a speculum having opposed blades opened for retracting tissue from anterior and posterior wall surfaces of the vagina and a frame having an opening through which internal structures are visualized, wherein the apparatus comprises a first lateral structure including:

a first handle portion including a J-shaped downwardly open slot extending along a first lateral portion of the frame and inwardly along a first curved portion of the frame with the first side of the frame engaged within the downwardly open slot for removably attaching the first lateral structure to a first side of the frame of the speculum; and

a first lateral blade extending downward from the first handle portion, laterally adjacent a space between the opened opposed blades of the speculum with the first side of the frame engaged within the downwardly open slot of the first handle portion.

3. (currently amended): The apparatus of claim 4 2, additionally including a clamping screw for holding the handle portion on the frame with the frame extending through the downwardly open slot.

4. (currently amended): The apparatus of claim 4 2, wherein the first lateral blade extends downward inwardly adjacent the downwardly open slot.

5. (currently amended): The apparatus of claim 4 2, wherein the first lateral blade extends downward outwardly adjacent the downwardly open slot.

1 6. (currently amended): The apparatus of claim 4 2, wherein the apparatus
2 additionally comprises a second lateral structure including:

3 a second handle portion including a J-shaped downwardly open slot
4 extending along a second lateral portion of the frame and inwardly along a
5 second curved portion of the frame with a second side of the frame engaged
6 within the downwardly open slot for removably attaching the second lateral
7 structure to a second side of the frame of the speculum, the second side of the
8 speculum being opposite the first side of the speculum; and

9 a second blade extending downward from the second handle portion,
10 laterally adjacent the space between the opened opposed blades of the
11 speculum with the second side of the frame engaged within the downwardly open
12 slot of the second handle portion.

1 7 (canceled)

1 8. (currently amended): ~~The vaginal speculum of claim 7, additionally~~
2 ~~comprising~~ A vaginal speculum comprising:

3 a pair of opposed blades movable between a closed position and an open
4 position, wherein the opposed blades lie together in the closed position for
5 insertion into a vagina, and wherein the opposed blades are separated from one
6 another for retracting vaginal tissue in the open position;

7 a frame disposed adjacent a proximal end of the pair of opposed blades,
8 wherein the frame includes an opening for visualizing internal structures within
9 the vagina through a space extending between the opposed blades in the open
10 position;

11 a first lateral structure including a first handle portion at a proximal end of
12 the first lateral structure and a first lateral blade, wherein the first handle portion
13 includes a downwardly open slot removably attaching the first lateral structure to

14 a first side of the frame, and wherein the first lateral blade extends downward
15 from the first handle portion, adjacent a first side of the space extending between
16 the opposed blades in the open position when the first lateral structure is
17 attached to the first side of the frame; and

18 a second lateral structure including a second handle portion at a proximal
19 end of the second lateral structure and a second lateral blade, wherein the
20 second handle portion includes a downwardly open slot for removably attaching
21 the second lateral structure to a second side of the frame, opposite the first side
22 of the frame, and wherein the second lateral blade extends downward from the
23 second handle portion, laterally adjacent a second side of the space extending
24 between the opposed blades in the open position, opposite the first side of the
25 space extending between opposed blades in the open position, when the second
26 lateral structure is attached to the second side of the frame, and wherein the first
27 and second lateral structures are separately attached to separate portions of the
28 frame.

1 9. (currently amended): ~~The vaginal speculum of claim 8, wherein the frame~~
2 ~~includes~~ A vaginal speculum comprising:

3 a pair of opposed blades movable between a closed position and an open
4 position, wherein the opposed blades lie together in the closed position for
5 insertion into a vagina, and wherein the opposed blades are separated from one
6 another for retracting vaginal tissue in the open position;

7 a frame, including a curved end portion and a straight lateral portion
8 extending along each side, disposed adjacent a proximal end of the pair of
9 opposed blades, wherein the frame includes an opening for visualizing internal
10 structures within the vagina through a space extending between the opposed
11 blades in the open position;

12 a first lateral structure including a first handle portion at a proximal end of
13 the first lateral structure and a first lateral blade, wherein the first handle portion
14 includes a downwardly open slot for removably attaching the first lateral structure

15 to a first side of the frame, and wherein the first lateral blade extends downward
16 from the first handle portion, adjacent a first side of the space extending between
17 the opposed blades in the open position when the first lateral structure is
18 attached to the first side of the frame; and

19 a second lateral structure including a second handle portion at a proximal
20 end of the second lateral structure and a second lateral blade, wherein the
21 second handle portion includes a downwardly open slot for removably attaching
22 the second lateral structure to a second side of the frame, opposite the first side
23 of the frame, and wherein the second lateral blade extends downward from the
24 second handle portion, laterally adjacent a second side of the space extending
25 between the opposed blades in the open position, opposite the first side of the
26 space extending between opposed blades in the open position, when the
27 second lateral structure is attached to the second side of the frame,

1 and wherein each of the downwardly open slots is a J-shaped slot
2 extending along one of the lateral portions of the frame and inwardly along of the
3 curved end portion of the frame with the first and second lateral structures
4 attached to the frame.

1 10. (currently amended): The vaginal speculum of claim [[8]] 9, wherein the first
2 lateral structure and the second lateral structure ~~each of the lateral structures~~
3 ~~additionally includes~~ include a clamping screw engaging the frame with the
4 lateral structures attached to the frame.

1 11. (currently amended): The vaginal speculum of claim [[8]] 9, wherein the
2 ~~lateral blades~~ first lateral blade and the second lateral blade extend downward
3 through the opening within the frame with the lateral structures attached to the
4 frame.

1 12. (currently amended): The vaginal speculum of claim [[8]] 9, wherein the
2 ~~lateral blades~~ first lateral blade and the second lateral blade extend downward

3 outwardly from the frame with the lateral structures attached to the frame.

1 13. (original): A method for performing a vaginal examination, comprising:

2 inserting an opposed pair of blades of a speculum into a vaginal opening
3 with the opposed blades lying against one another;

4 opening the opposed pair of blades to expose internal structures within the
5 vaginal opening through a space between the opposed pair of blades;

6 after opening the opposed pair of blades, inserting a first lateral blade
7 within the vaginal opening to extend along a first side of the space between the
8 opposed pair of blades;

9 attaching a handle portion disposed at a proximal end of the first lateral
10 blade to a first side of an open frame of the speculum, extending adjacent a
11 proximal end of the space between the opposed pair of blades;

12 removing the handle portion of the first lateral structure from the frame of
13 the speculum;

14 withdrawing the first lateral blade from the vaginal opening;

15 closing the opposed pair of blades within the vaginal opening to lie against
16 one another; and

17 removing the opposed pair of blades from the vaginal opening.

1 14. (original): The method of claim 13, additionally comprising:

2 after opening the opposed pair of blades, inserting a second lateral blade
3 within the vaginal opening to extend along a second side of the space between
4 the opposed pair of blades, opposite the first side of the space between the
5 opposed pair of blades;

6 attaching a handle portion disposed at a proximal end of the second
7 lateral blade to a second side of an open frame of the speculum, extending
8 adjacent a proximal end of the space between the opposed pair of blades;

9 removing the handle portion of the second lateral structure from the frame
10 of the speculum; and

11 withdrawing the second lateral blade from the vaginal opening.

1 15. (original): The method of claim 14, wherein
2 the lateral blades are inserted through an opening within the open frame,
3 and
4 the lateral blades are removed from the vaginal opening before the
5 opposed pair of blades are closed.

1 16. (original): The method of claim 14, wherein
2 the lateral blades are inserted outwardly adjacent opposite sides of the
3 open frame, and
4 the opposed pair of blades are closed before the lateral blades are
5 removed from the vaginal opening.

1 17. (original): The method of claim 14, wherein
2 each of the handle portions disposed at a proximal end of a lateral blade
3 includes a slot open adjacent the lateral blade, and
4 each of the handle portions is attached to the open frame with a portion of
5 the open frame extending within the slot.

1 18. (currently amended): ~~The method of claim 17, wherein the~~ A method for
2 performing a vaginal examination, comprising:
3 inserting an opposed pair of blades of a speculum into a vaginal opening
4 with the opposed blades lying against one another;
5 opening the opposed pair of blades to expose internal structures within the
6 vaginal opening through a space between the opposed pair of blades;
7 after opening the opposed pair of blades, inserting a first lateral blade
8 within the vaginal opening to extend along a first side of the space between the
9 opposed pair of blades;
10 after opening the opposed pair of blades, inserting a second lateral blade

11 within the vaginal opening to extend along a second side of the space between
12 the opposed pair of blades, opposite the first side of the space between the
13 opposed pair of blades;

14 attaching a first handle portion, disposed at a proximal end of the first
15 lateral blade, including a slot open adjacent the first lateral blade, to a first side of
16 an open frame of the speculum, wherein the open frame includes a curved end
17 portion and a straight lateral portion extending along each side, wherein the slot
18 within the first handle portion each of the slots is J-shaped to extend along a first
19 one of the straight lateral portions and inward along the curved end portion of the
20 open frame, and wherein the first handle portion is attached to extend adjacent a
21 proximal end of the space between the opposed pair of blades;

22 attaching a second handle portion, disposed at a proximal end of the
23 second lateral blade, including a slot open adjacent the second lateral blade, to a
24 second side of an open frame of the speculum, wherein the slot within the
25 second handle portion is J-shaped to extend along a second one of the straight
26 lateral portions and inward along the curved end portion of the open frame, and
27 wherein the second handle portion is attached to extend adjacent a proximal end
28 of the space between the opposed pair of blades;

29 removing the handle portion of the first lateral structure from the frame of
30 the speculum;

31 removing the handle portion of the second lateral structure from the frame
32 of the speculum;

33 withdrawing the first lateral blade from the vaginal opening;

34 withdrawing the second lateral blade from the vaginal opening;

35 closing the opposed pair of blades within the vaginal opening to lie against
36 one another; and

37 removing the opposed pair of blades from the vaginal opening.

1 19. (original): The method of claim 14, wherein

2 each of the handle portions is attached to the open frame by tightening a
3 clamping screw against the open frame; and

4 each of the clamping screws is loosened before removing the handle
5 portion from the open frame.

1 20. (new): The method of claim 18, wherein

2 the lateral blades are inserted through an opening within the open frame,
3 and

4 the lateral blades are removed from the vaginal opening before the
5 opposed pair of blades are closed.

1 21. (new): The method of claim 18, wherein

2 the lateral blades are inserted outwardly adjacent opposite sides of the
3 open frame, and

4 the opposed pair of blades are closed before the lateral blades are
5 removed from the vaginal opening.

1 22. (new): The method of claim 18, wherein

2 each of the handle portions is attached to the open frame by tightening a
3 clamping screw against the open frame; and

4 each of the clamping screws is loosened before removing the handle
5 portion from the open frame.